

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2052

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2666

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, BM, CH

SUBJ: PRC UNEASY ABOUT POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF COUP PLOT

1. PRC AMBASSADOR YEH CHENG-CHANG, AT A RECEPTION ON JULY 23, PRESSED ME HARD ABOUT CURRENT REPORTS TO THE EFFECT THAT ONE OF THE CAPTAINS INVOLVED IN THE COUP PLOT AGAINST NE WIN HAD BEEN DENIED ASYLUM AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. ON THE MORNING OF JULY 29, I TELEPHONED THE PRC EMBASSY AND TOLD YEH I HAD SOME INFORMATION ABOUT A MATTER REGARDING WHICH HE HAD EXPRESSED SOME INTEREST. I OFFERED TO CALL AT THE PRC EMBASSY. YEH DEFINITELY UNDERSTOOD MY INTENTION, BUT HE GAVE ME SUCH A NONCOMMITAL REPLY I THOUGHT IT WAS PROBABLY A POLITE REFUSAL TO RECEIVE. NEXT MORNING, THE CHINESE EMBASSY CALLED AND SAID YEH WOULD LIKE TO SEE ME AT 10:00 A.M. I PRESUME YEH CLEARED THE MATTER WITH PEKING, OR ELSE HELD A STAFF MEETING ABOUT IT.

2. YEH AND HIS INTEPRETER, SUN CHUNG-SHU, MET ME AT THE ENTRANCE AND TOOK ME TO A SMALL RECEPTION ROOM. I GAVE THEM COPIES OF A STATEMENT CONCERNING THE ASYLUM REQUEST
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INCIDENT WHICH WE HAD PREPARED IN THE EMBASSY AS

CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE. AFTER YEH AND SUN HAD GONE THROUGH THE STATEMENT WORD BY WORD, YEH ALMOST SNORTED WITH IMPATIENCE. "THIS IS NOT THE COMPLETE STORY," HE SAID. WHAT WAS THE MOTIVE OF THE PLOTTERS? WHY HAD THE MAN SOUGHT OUT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY?. WAS THE PLOT NOT CONNECTED WITH THE DISPUTE CENTERING AROUND OUSTED GENERAL TIN OO AND GENERAL SAN YU? WAS IT A COINCIDENCE THAT THE REPORTS OF SAN YU'S IMPENDING DEMOTION OR OUSTER CAME TO AN END ABOUT THE TIME THE COUP PLOT WAS DISCOVERED?

3. YEH'S QUESTIONS, WITH THEIR OVERTONES OF ANTIPATHY TOWARD SAN YU, SEEMED TO ME TO REFLECT THE FAIRLY COMMON ASSUMPTION THAT SAN YU, WITHOUT NECESSARILY BEING A SOVIET APOLOGIST, AND WHILE HIMSELF OF CHINESE ANCESTRY, REPRESENTS A RATHER PRO-SOVIET-ISH, RATHER ANTI-CHINESE POINT OF VIEW WITHIN THE GUB, WHILE TIN OO REPRESENTED PRO-WESTER, RATHER LESS EXTREME ANTI-CHINESE TENDENCIES. AT ANY RATE, I FELT IT DESIRABLE TO ALLAY ANY DOUBTS YEH MIGHT HAVE ABOUT OUR POSITION IN THE MATTER (E.G., ANY SUSPICIONS THAT THE U.S. WAS BEHIND THE PLOT, OR, COUNTRARIWISE, THAT THE DENIAL OF ASYLUM MEANT WE WERE HJO-SAN YU), SO I GAVE YEH THE FULL STORY, STRESSING (A) THAT WHILE THE PLOTTERS HAD SOME IDEA OF ASKING TIN OO TO HEAD A SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT IF

THEIR PLOT SUCCEEDED, AND WHILE THEIR PRINCIPAL MOTIVE WAS EXTREME DISSATISFACTION WITH ECONOMIC CONDITIONS GROWING OUT OF NE WIN'S (AND SAN YU'S) POLICIES, TIN OO HIMSELF HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF THE PLOT, LET ALONE BACKING IT, AND (B) THAT THE U.S. HAD FIRST LEARNED OF THE PLOT ON THE EVENING OF JULY 2, AFTER IT HAD ALREADY BEEN UNCOVERED. I THINK YEH FINALLY BELIEVED ME.

4. WHILE REFUTING ANY SUGGESTION OF U.S. VOLITIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN EITHER THE COUP PLOT OR ITS EXPOSURE, I AGREED WITH YEH THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT THE UNCOVERING OF THE PLOT HAD SAVED SAN YU FROM DISGRACE, OR AT LEAST HELPED HIM. IT

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WAS OUR ASSESSMENT THAT PRESIDENT NE WIN'S IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE CHALLENGE TO HIS REGIME AND ITS POLICIES MIGHT BE TO TIGHTEN UP AND BECOME EVEN MORE INSISTENT ON THE DOCTRINAIRE LINE ASSOCATTED WITH SAN YU. ALSO, EVEN THOUGH GENERAL TIN OO WAS NOT INVOLVED DIRECTLY, THE FACT THAT THE PLOTTERS HAD THE IDEA OF TURNING TO SAN YU'S RIVAL TO HEAD A NEW GOVERNMENT MIGHT HAVE REDOUNDED TO SAN YU'S CREDIT.

5. COMMENT: THIS IS NOT THE FIRST INKLING WE HAVE HAD THAT YEH IS INCLINED TO CREDIT THE REPORTED POLICY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TIN OO AND SAN YU. WE THINK THAT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO MEN ARE OFTEN EXAGGERATED, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS SAN YU'S PRO-SOVIETISM. HOWEVER, THE REPORTS PROBABLY DO CORRECTLY REFLECT CERTAIN GENERAL POLICY TENDENCIES ASSOCIATED WITH THEM.
OSBORN

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